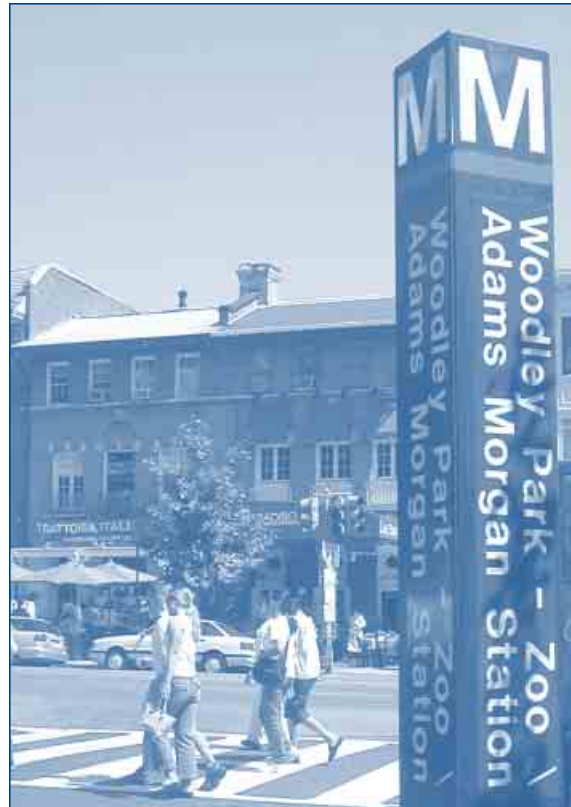




IMPLEMENTING TOD IN DC:

TOOLS FOR REALIZING TRANSIT ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT

The public sector, private sector, and community leadership all have a role to play in implementing transit-oriented development to create strong, cohesive, and successful neighborhood centers. Strong leadership from the public sector removes barriers to implementing TOD, catalyzes TOD efforts, and sets the stage for development. The community shapes public policies and works with private developers and businesses to create a transit-oriented center. The private sector provides innovative, flexible, and creative projects that accomplish both corporate needs and neighborhood goals.



MetroBus and MetroRail service is very much a part of The District of Columbia and Washington's reputation as a livable city.

CONCEPTS

Tools for implementing TOD include ...

- Consistent and predictable plans developed through community visioning;
- Facilitation project review and permitting;
- Innovative regulations to enable transit-oriented development;
- Public and private investment in development and infrastructure;
- Community planning, leadership, and advocacy;

GUIDELINES

The public sector typically sets the framework for development. The private sector then can develop within these plans for transit-oriented neighborhood centers and contribute to the community fabric through improvements to the physical environment of the area, bringing new residents, stores, or services to the area; and providing community amenities. The community, of course, must participate with both public and private partners to help create projects that benefit the community.

PLANNING AND INFORMATION: A ROADMAP FOR SUCCESS

A critical first step in implementing transit-oriented neighborhood centers is to gather, share, and analyze information and conduct planning in advance of development projects. Tools include:

- Transit-area planning
- Market and feasibility studies
- Transportation and parking demand management studies
- Design guidelines
- Community education and outreach

There is no “one-size-fits-all” approach to designing transit-oriented neighborhood centers. Transit is an asset that neighborhood leaders can use to attract investments that achieve neighborhood priorities.

The best way neighborhoods can take advantage of transit is through vision and proactive planning. Proactive planning identifies neighborhood assets; the things that are good about the neighborhood, and builds off of these to develop strategies for improving the elements that are still lacking in the neighborhood. This may mean stronger local businesses, a safer environment, quality open spaces, or more housing opportunities.

Once a neighborhood has articulated the objectives it wishes to accomplish, then a plan can be adopted to translate these ideas into a viable physical development strategy. This advance plan is a powerful tool for neighborhood residents, the public sector, and potential developers. It sets a common framework that conveys the neighborhood’s vision and gives developers a predictable “road map” for building in the area. The plan defines the relationship between individual projects so that, when implemented, they add up to a cohesive and logical neighborhood center that reflects the unique character of the community.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT: EARLY AND OFTEN

Often, neighborhood residents fight development proposals. Too often this is simply because not enough information was shared with residents early on in the process. Developers can encourage and invite community participation by sharing conceptual development

plans with neighborhood leaders and inviting early input into the process. This saves the developer both time and money in moving a project forward, creates a positive working environment with the community, and generally results in a much better product.

The public sector too must share information regarding new investments, changes in zoning or policy, and public programs available to their community. Planning is an important tool for organized community involvement.

Ultimately “implementation” of community involvement lies with community members themselves to participate in developments in their communities and encourage others to join as well.



Public involvement early on in the planning and development process is critical to project success.

INVESTMENT: BUILDING COMMUNITY

Investment attracts private investment. Public investments in a transit-area, particularly in underserved areas, send a signal to the private sector that the area has development potential and improves the physical and economic attractiveness of the area for private investment. Public investments take many forms:

- Physical infrastructure improvements
- Land purchase and assembly
- Development incentives or tax abatements
- Development of public facilities (recreation, libraries, office space, etc.)
- Joint development
- Public financing

The private sector investment is critical in creating projects that encourage the use of transit, define and enhance the neighborhood center, and provide a benefit to the community that lives there. Aside from the development project itself, public sector developers and financiers can invest in the community by providing:

- Public amenities; Though a potential additional capital cost in development, amenities can pay for themselves by expanding neighborhood support for the project. Amenities can be simply improving the pedestrian environment at the street level, providing well-lit and safe public spaces such as plazas, or building bus shelters into building façades to facilitate transit use and increase clear sidewalk space.

Consistent public policies, such as design standards, increase predictability for private investors and neighborhood residents alike.

- Innovative loan and financing products: New mortgage products—dubbed “Location Efficient Mortgages” (LEMs) or “smart commute” loans—make housing near transit more affordable by offsetting the price of housing near transit with the decreased household expense of multiple automobile ownership.
- Flexible financing for mixed-use development: Many banks are set up to fund only one kind of development project—all residential or all commercial. Mixed use development loans are necessary to support the type of development best suited near transit in the neighborhood center.

FACILITATION: MAKING THINGS HAPPEN

Perhaps the most frustrating experience for developers and community residents is to hammer out a development project that all parties are excited and eager about only for government processes to delay development for months or years.

Permit review can be an unpredictable process. A process that makes transit area development

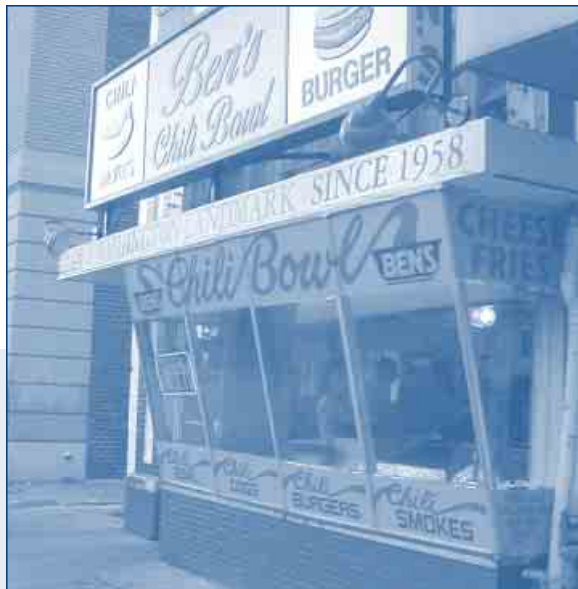


easier, while taking some of the risk and uncertainty out of TOD makes a transit area more attractive to private investors and developers than other areas of the neighborhood and prevent encroachment of development into areas where it is not wanted or cannot be supported. The following are tools that can simplify the permit process.

1. Coordinate efforts of public sector agencies. Eliminate conflicts between agency requirements and procedures that can delay permit approval. Establishing multi-agency review of TOD projects and providing one designated contact person for transit oriented projects can simplify the process and facilitate coordination of associated requirements.
2. Ensure consistent application of regulations. A straightforward process that is predictable and easy to navigate can encourage TOD

efforts. Prepare a packet containing all regulations for transit areas and/or transit overlay zones. Also, provide a checklist to developers of all applicable requirements.

3. Allow for flexibility in the permitting process. Establishing an interactive review process can be effective in negotiating requirements. Similar to the PUD process, interaction with developers can shorten permitting time and result in benefits for the public, as well as the developer.
4. Conduct some of the permit steps in advance of development proposals. Examining specific impact issues early in planning process, such as transportation and utility capacity, can reduce uncertainty and permit review time.



REGULATIONS: TOOLS THAT WORK

Finally, regulations can both help and hinder the goal of maximizing transit assets. Zoning in the District of Columbia is not significantly different in transit areas than in other parts of the city. Thus, transit areas have no special advantage in attracting development or investment. In some neighborhoods, zoning is a disincentive or even bars the mix of uses and densities essential to TOD.

There are many options for tailoring zoning to TOD areas including rezoning properties, creating new zoning districts, or creating transit overlay zones. To rezone a property means to change its classification in a way that facilitates transit area development. A new zoning district creates a new set of land uses and standards tailored specifically to the needs of a transit area. Similar to special zoning for an historic district, a Transit Overlay Zone supplements the existing zoning for properties with provisions that apply only to a defined transit area.

Transit Overlay Zones have been recommended as one zoning strategy by the Mayoral Transit-Oriented Development Task Force; however, a

A consistent transit-oriented development policy can help to retain and strengthen existing businesses and residents by guiding new development to where it can contribute to neighborhood priorities.

combination of strategies may be necessary to achieve TOD objectives in defined geographic boundaries, while protecting the character of the surrounding neighborhood. Tailored zoning increases predictability for the community, developers and land owners. Zoning modifications can impact involved properties in three general ways:

1. Control distribution of land uses. Require a high mix of desirable land uses in a defined geographic area. As a result, a sterile separation of land uses and land uses inconsistent with increased transit use can be avoided in TOD areas.
2. Control density of development. Through floor area ratio (FAR) requirements, the intensity of development in a defined transit center can be increased to create a compact walking environment.
3. Implement design standards. Design standards make sure the five design principles for developing defined neighborhood centers are incorporated and properties are maximized. A variety of design typologies can be developed to respond to the character of District neighborhoods and included in zoning changes. Communities can determine which one(s) most closely reflects their neighborhood objectives. These standards can serve as the code by which to evaluate development within TOD zones.

PROMOTE PRIVATE DEVELOPMENT THROUGH PUBLIC ACTIONS

Adopted from the Puget Sound Regional Council

Public agencies can initiate investment in a transit area through public actions. Public investments in transit areas can leverage potential private investment. The following are some of the proactive measures local government can take to create defined neighborhood centers.

1. **Develop Small Area Plans.** Working with a community to develop small area plans for defined transit station areas can redirect District and private sector resources to these priority areas. Development can be attracted resulting in physical improvements and economic revitalization.
2. **Market potential development opportunities.** A marketing strategy can be used to “sell” transit-oriented development opportunities to the development community. The strategy should address developer concerns and obstacles, as well as initiating a process that shapes market conditions, not merely responds to current market demand.
3. **Establish incentives.** Often, incentives are necessary to attract developers to the relatively riskier practice of TOD. Incentives may include density bonuses for providing public amenities, as well as favorable permit review procedures.
4. **Provide public facilities and infrastructure.** Infrastructure investment can demonstrate a public commitment to neighborhood transit centers and can provide needed improvements to the safety and appearance of an area. Investments may include a police substation, sidewalk amenities and utility improvements. In addition, public facilities such as libraries and parks can be strong magnets for developments and transit use.
5. **Package and assemble land for development.** Public action in securing and assembling land can result in properties of sufficient size to be economically viable and spur change in station area land use patterns. Small and challenging parcels can be combined with other properties and

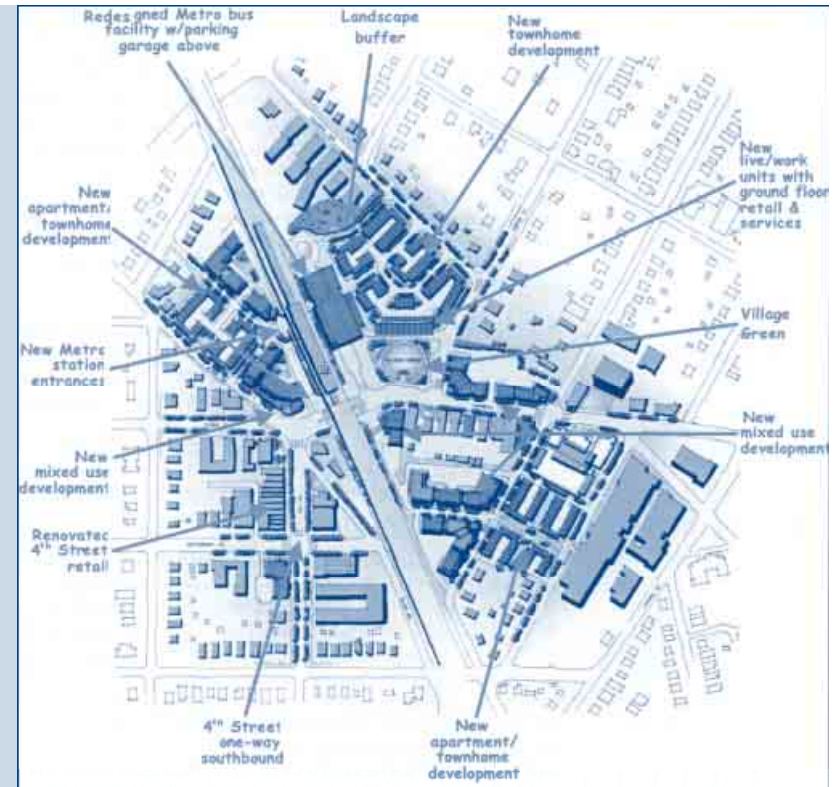


Federal investment in the Washington Navy Yard attracted significant private investment to the surrounding neighborhood.

planned as part of a neighborhood development. Also, land adjacent to transit stations that is owned by WMATA is regularly made available for development opportunities.

6. Help in securing project financing. Aggressive financial participation and risk sharing can help stimulate TOD. One method of risk sharing is underwriting land costs in return for project participation. For example, set below market rents in exchange for a portion of project revenues for certain length of time. Also, public/private partnerships can also aid in securing project financing.
7. Pursue Public/Private Partnerships. Joint development efforts are based on the idea of combining transit investment and commercial development to allow the public to share in value enhancements generated by public investment.

It may be beneficial to purchase a portion of a project for a public purpose; library, offices, etc... The developer gains a paying tenant while the city gains an integrated mixed-use project and well-located facility. The federal Department of Transportation has made funding available for TOD joint developments. The benefits include securing a revenue stream for the transit system and shaping land use to increase economic development and transit use



Development of land adjacent to transit can catalyze redevelopment of other properties within the transit area.